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Forms and first principles

JULIA ANNAS

I.

In this paper I shall present and discuss some arguments from the περὶ ἰδεῶν, and try to show that some commonly-held ideas about them are not well-based, and that they are more interesting than has been realised in revealing Aristotle's attitude to Plato.

The arguments are those referred to by Aristotle at 990 b 17-22, which are given by Alexander in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, 85. 21-88.2, and they concern problems for the holders of the theory of Forms over ἀρχαί or "first principles"[1].

These arguments have only been assigned to the περὶ ἰδεῶν recently. In form they seem to belong to the group of arguments to which Aristotle refers and which Alexander gives. It is their content which renders them controversial: they seem to import ideas which do not belong to the theory of Forms as it appears in the other arguments[2], and which are commonly ascribed to Plato's "unwritten doctrines". Hence they were not accepted as part of the περὶ ἰδεῶν in early studies like those of Karpp[3] and Philippson.[4] The first to argue for their inclusion was Wilpert, in an article[5] based on analysis of Alexander's exegetical habits. He discussed them also in his later book[6]. Ross, convinced by Wilpert's arguments, accepted them in his Oxford edition and translation of Aristotle's fragments. The ascription was challenged by Cherniss[7], who argued that 86. 13-23 at most come from the περὶ ἰδεῶν. Wilpert's position has been upheld by S. Mansion[8] and Berti[9], but in answer to Cherniss' general arguments, not on the basis of an analysis of the arguments themselves, which in fact have been rather neglected.[10] I shall try to show that, while these arguments are not among Aristotle's best, they are not weak, and are of great interest.

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[1] The troublesome Greek word ἀρχή is difficult to translate; much of the elucidation of the arguments is devoted to giving it a sense. I shall translate baldly as "first principle", or as "principle" to avoid intolerably clumsy English.

[2] The other arguments deal with proofs recognisable from the dialogues, though in some cases they have been made more rigorous (see G. E. L. Owen, "A proof in the περὶ ἰδεῶν", J. H. S. 1957, for one case).

[3] "Die Schrift des Aristoteles περὶ ἰδεῶν" *Hermes* 1933.

[4] "Il περὶ ἰδεῶν di Aristotele", *Rivista di Filologia* 1936.

[5] "Reste verlorener Aristotelesschriften bei Alexander von Aphrodisias", *Hermes* 1940 p. 369-396, esp. 378-385.

[6] ***Zwei aristotelische Frühschriften über die Ideenlehre***, Regensburg 1949, p. 97-118.

My argument does not amount to a conclusive proof that these arguments do come from the περὶ ἰδεῶν, but it should cast doubt on attempts to show that they do not. The aim, however, is not historical; I am trying to bring out the philosophical interest in these arguments.

II.

First it will be helpful to set out the arguments. At 990 b 17-21 Aristotle says,

> Altogether the arguments for Forms do away with the existence of what the believers in Forms put before the existence of Forms; for the result is that not the two[11] but number is primary, and the relative prior to what is independent.

To this Alexander appends six arguments, which I number as follows:

1 = 85.21-86.3
2 = 86.3-11
3 = 11-13
4 = 13-16
5 = 16-20
6 = 20-23

Aristotle's text continues,

> -together with all the ways of contradicting the first principles made by people who have followed up the theory of Forms.

[7] *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore 1944, p. 300 ff, appendix VI, n. 191. Ackrill supports Cherniss in his review of Wilpert in *Mind* 1952.

[8] "La critique de la théorie des Idées dans le περὶ ἰδεῶν d'Aristote", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 1949, esp. 196-8.

[9] *La filosofia del primo Aristotele*, Padua 1964, p. 225-232.

[10] Cf. Mansion, p. 198, "De cette série d'objections, dont certaines apparaissent assez faibles, ne retenons que l'orientation générale".

[11] I use "two" instead of "dyad" to translate δυάς, since this makes clearer the relation between "two" (ἡ δυάς) and "the indefinite two" (ἡ ἀόριστοι δυάς), which is lost if we render the latter as "dyad". (This is even clearer in Greek because of the article with ordinary number-terms).

Alexander adds six more arguments:

7 = 87.4-8
8 = 8-11
9 = 12-15
10 = 16-19
11 = 19-20
12 = 20-88. 2.

I shall go through these arguments and bring out their important features. Before this, however, we must face the problem of the "first principles" under discussion and what they are.

III.

Aristotle only mentions first principles; it is Alexander who tells us what they are, before introducing the arguments:

> ... their principles are the principles even of the Forms themselves. The principles are the one and the indefinite two, as Aristotle said shortly before and as he expounded himself in *On the Good*; but they are also, for the Platonists, the first principles of number. Aristotle says that these first principles are made away with by these arguments setting up Forms; and if they are made away with then what follows on the principles, that is, such as come from the principles, will also be made away with.

Alexander is adding two important assertions: the one and the indefinite two are the principles of number and also of other things including Forms which "come from" them; and arguments against the principles threaten the theory of Forms because the principles are "naturally prior" to Forms, so that if the principles are shown not to exist then Forms have been shown not to exist also.[12] According to Wilpert,[13] natural priority is such a typically Platonic idea that Alexander on his own would never have thought of attributing it to Aristotle; so it must have been in the περὶ ἰδεῶν. In the actual arguments, as we shall see, natural priority does not figure at all. On the other hand, it does figure in the fragments of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ[14]; and in view of Alexander's explicit reference to that work it is likely that he is importing from the περὶ τἀγαϑοῦ into his interpretation of the περὶ ἰδεῶν not only the idea that the one and the indefinite two are the principles of everything including Forms but also the idea of natural priority. Neither idea is called for by the arguments themselves, and so instead of forcing them on the interpretation of the arguments it is more prudent to reject what Alexander says as being his own interpretation, based on the περὶ τἀγαϑοῦ.

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[12] See *Met*. 1019 a 1-4, and cf. G. E. L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in some earlier works of Aristotle", in Düring and Owen, eds. ***Aristotle and Plato in the mid-fourth century***. This relation of existence-dependence is surprisingly like Hume's definition of "cause" in the first ***Enquiry***, p. 76 Selby-Bigge: "where if the first object had not been, the second never had existed". (Hume never brings this into connection with his "constant conjunction" analysis). It is in this sense that the entities that are naturally prior to others are their "causes".

[13] ZaF p. 101.

[14] Cf. the first argument reported by Alexander in *Met*. 55. 20-56. 35 (= Testimonium Platonicum 22 B in Gaiser, ***Platons ungeschriebene Lehre***, Stuttgart 1964). Gaiser himself lays undue weight on the idea and its importance

Cherniss argues that this remark of Alexander's shows that he did not find these arguments in the περὶ ἰδεῶν. "It is more than unlikely that, had the περὶ ἰδεῶν contained this argument, he would have referred not to it.... but to the περὶ τἀγαϑοῦ, the *Metaphysics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* to support his interpretation"[15]. The *Ethics* reference, however, concerns a quite different argument[16]. The *Metaphysics* reference, though vague ("shortly before"), probably refers to A 6, and both it and the περὶ τἀγαϑοῦ reference would naturally be taken as referring the reader to different and more explicit accounts of the principles which figure here, with no implication that they were not to be found in the περὶ ἰδεῶν. They do occur quite explicitly in argument 8, of which Cherniss offers no account.

Cherniss also bases his exclusion of these arguments on the fact that "this passage also occurs in M chapter 4 where Aristotle has expressly excluded from his consideration of the ideas "the nature of number" and therewith the notion of the one and the indefinite dyad as principles"[17]. However, Cherniss himself has earlier[18] specified what exactly is meant by this "exclusion of the nature of number": "what Aristotle excludes as foreign to the original theory is not all consideration of number or a doctrine of ideas of number but any and every notion according to which the nature of the ideas *as such* is numerical". What is excluded in M is the idea that Forms are numbers, in some sense, and that the one and the indefinite two, the principles of number, are also the principles of Forms (and other things). In fact Cherniss

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for Plato in application to the "Dimensionenfolge", the series point-line-plane-solid.

[15] A.C.P.A. p. 301, n. 199.

[16] It occurs at 86. 8-12, where Alexander is clearly explaining a statement about relatives which he finds difficult by reference to a comment of Aristotle's about relatives in the *Nic. Ethics*; it has nothing to do with principles.

[17] A.C.P.A. p. 301. This argument goes back to Karpp.

[18] A.C.P.A. p. 197.

is assuming that if the one and the indefinite two figure in these arguments, then they do so not just as principles of numbers but also as principles of Forms, Forms being regarded as numbers in some way. But, as we have seen, the only grounds for taking the principles to be principles of Forms as well as numbers come from Alexander, and he may well be taking this from the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ. As far as concerns the actual arguments, there is no need to treat the one and the indefinite two as anything more than principles of numbers. Consequently, there is no problem with the recurrence of the passage of Aristotle's text in M 4, since Forms are being there treated purely as Forms, and the one and the indefinite two are merely the principles of number.[19]

Cherniss himself agrees[20] that his objections do not prove that *nothing* in Alexander comes from the περὶ ἰδεῶν, and allows that arguments 3-6 may do so. If so, however, Alexander is guilty of unadvertised shuttling between sources and his own comments[21], and this is unlikely in itself as well as contradicting Wilpert's conclusions based on careful study of Alexander's style. Moreover, Cherniss has no account of 7-12, unless they are taken to be pure invention by Alexander, but this is surely unlikely in view of their similarity to the neighbouring arguments. Thus the fact that Cherniss can "interpret away" argument 1 (and with it 2 and 3) is not a strong enough basis for his rejection of the arguments on the grounds that the principles here are the principles of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ.

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[19] This argument does not depend on Plato's having at any time identified Forms with numbers, only on the assumption that Aristotle could at times argue as though he had. In fact it seems fairly likely from the programme of M 1 that what Aristotle intends when he speaks of excluding the nature of number is simply that Forms and numbers will be treated separately. In M he is dealing with people who believe that abstract objects exist, and since there are two main forms to this belief, namely belief in Forms and belief in numbers, Aristotle takes it to be clearer and more logical to examine the grounds for belief in either separately. If this is so then Aristotle *is* excluding considerations about number, and the one and the indefinite two should find no place. So there is still a residual difficulty here. However, we should bear two things in mind: i) M 4-5 is taken over more or less bodily from A 9, and since these arguments are not given but only mentioned, Aristotle may well have carelessly forgotten that some of his Form-arguments did in fact bring in the principles of number. They would be fairly easy to overlook, and the resulting inconsistency is not vital to the chapter. ii) In any case the programme for M 4-5 is imperfectly carried out: Aristotle takes over from A 9 "attempted interpretations and developments of the doctrine within the Academy" (990 b 21-2 = 1079 a 17-9) even though the examination has there in M 4 been restricted to the theory of ideas as originally understood" (Cherniss, A.C.P.A. p. 196).

[20] A.C.P.A. p. 301 n. 199.

[21] This is pointed out by Mansion, p. 197 n. 78; she also makes the point that the arguments do not suppose a target like the theory of principles of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ, but Platonic theory as in the rest of the περὶ ἰδεῶν. (Her third point, that Aristotle's περὶ τἀγαθοῦ was merely an account of Plato's words, without any arguments or additions of his own, is more doubtful in view of the nature of the remains). See Wilpert, "Reste..." pp. 369-371.

Cherniss is not the only one to assume that we have to accept one limb of the following disjunction: "Either the one and the indefinite two are not in question here, or else they are, in which case we have the theory of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ in which they were also the principles of Forms, and Forms were identified with numbers". Wilpert accepts this too (he heads his discussion of these arguments "Kritik der Idealzahlenlehre" on this basis, although there is not a hint of such ideas in the arguments)[22]. If the one and the indefinite two are here at all, they are here as heroes of a grand metaphysical scheme of explanation with a theory of Forms as Numbers.

It is important to reject this disjunction, which seems to go back to Alexander's reference to the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ. If we accept the first limb, with Cherniss, we are involved in arbitrary and unconvincing dealing with Alexander's evidence. If we accept the second limb, with Wilpert, we import into the περὶ ἰδεῶν, alarmingly, the full paraphenalia of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ, and the recurrence of the passage in M 4 becomes puzzling or implies that Aristotle is flatly inconsistent. In neither case do we do justice to the περὶ ἰδεῶν arguments, which stand on their own feet without propping from the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ. If we prudently reject a περὶ τἀγαθοῦ-based interpretation as being an extrapolation from Alexander's comments, we shall be able to examine the arguments on their own merits, making only the minimal assumption that they are aimed at showing that there is trouble in holding both the theory of Forms and the theory that the one and the indefinite two are principles of number.

[22] Wilpert himself admits (p. 118) that "die Idealzahlenlehre scheint nicht eigens angegriffen worden zu sein". Cf. Berti, p. 228, "In ogni caso le obiezioni di Aristotele presuppongono explicitamente la conoscenza della dottrina dei principi e dell'identificazione delle idee con i numeri". Here are the same two assumptions, that there is only *one* form of the theory of principles, and that it involves identifying Forms with numbers.

IV.

I shall now present and discuss the arguments in order.

1. If for everything of which something in common is predicated there is something separate, a Form, and two is predicated even of the indefinite two, then there must be something – a Form – prior to it. So the indefinite two can no longer be a principle. But two, again, cannot be primary and a principle, since number is again predicated of it (as of a Form, because the Platonists take Forms to be numbers). So number, a kind of Form, must be primary for them. If so, number will be prior to the indefinite two, which is a principle for them, not the two prior to number; but if so the former can no longer be a principle, if it is what it is by sharing in something.

This obviously elucidates the first part of Aristotle's sentence in the *Metaphysics*, and tells us that the argument for Forms which threatens the principles is the "One over Many".[23]

Since we can say that "the indefinite two is (a) two", we can predicate "two" of the indefinite two. But this means that there is a Form, the Form of Two, which is prior to the indefinite two. The indefinite two therefore cannot be a first principle, since there is something prior to it. Worse: we can go on to say, "two is a number", and so we are predicating "number" of two; so by the same argument there will be a Form of Number prior to two. So since two was already shown to be prior to the indefinite two, the latter, although setting up as a first principle, is in fact not one but two steps from being a first principle.

The argument depends completely on use of the One over Many principle in conjunction with the simple truisms that the indefinite two is (a) two and that two is a number. (The indefinite two is a kind of two because there is another kind of two, the definite two; cf. *Met.* 1082 a 13 and Alexander in *Met.* 59. 20-3). The "Form of number" demanded by this argument is thus a straightforward result of applying the One over Many principle to a predication of "number"; it has nothing at all to do with special considerations about the concept of number as such, e.g. whether numbers do in fact have any single common feature. The One over Many is impartial between "number" and "two", producing a Form relentlessly for every general term, regardless of whether one would wish to postulate a Form on other grounds or not.

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[23] Cf. Aristotle on the One over Many at Alexander 80. 8-81.22. Cherniss (p. 302) says that the Platonic argument in question here is "obviously" the One over Many, in referring to Aristotle's statement in the *Metaphysics* text; but it is hard to see why he is entitled to do so, since he rejects 1 as unAristotelian (see below), and there is nothing in the *Metaphysics* text itself to suggest that the One over Many is in question, among the several arguments under discussion.

This interpretation implies that the step in brackets is not part of the argument. It is possible that it is a gloss by Alexander, and the course of the argument shows that this is surely so. The thought is complete without it, and rendered incoherent with it. The first step depended on the fact that the indefinite two is (a) two; so the second step should analogously depend on the fact that two is a number (this is why the argument shows that number is in fact the first principle that the indefinite two was supposed to be). But this is spoiled if the second step proceeds by showing not that two is a number but that the *Form of Two* is a number.[24] It is therefore very probable that this is a gloss by Alexander, who failed to see the argument as a whole and found the step, "two is a number" over-obvious.

The first striking thing about this argument is that the One over Many principle, establishing the existence of a Form for every general term, is presented as the only argument for Forms; thus a Form of Number is established by it, although we know on other grounds that the Platonists did not accept a Form of Number.

The second striking thing is the use of "prior", "first", "primary" and "first principle". Wilpert[25] has pointed out that in these arguments πρῶτον is used with the genitive in the sense of πρότερον, and that πρῶτον is used as a synonym for ἀρχή. If A is prior to B then A is a first principle of B.

In this argument, however, the notion of being prior to is used in two very different ways. If a Form is set up by the One over Many for some object then it is prior to (a first principle of) that object or objects, of which the Form is predicated[26]. Wilpert calls this "logical priority". But "being prior to" (a first principle of) is also used of the relation of the indefinite two (and presumably the one) to the products of which they are the principles. That these products are numbers is

[24] Cf. argument 8 below.

[25] ZaF p. 154.

[26] Strictly, of course, of which the *word for* the Form is predicated; but distinguishing use and mention of expressions for Forms would produce unhelpful complications in the arguments.

implied by arguments 2 and 3; the way they were produced is highly disputed, but there can be no doubt that they were for Plato what "generated" the number-series.[27] This is, however, very different from the logical priority of a Form to its instances. Predicating a one of some many is hardly the same as generating numbers in a theory-based way from principles that could also be regarded as having the logic of *elements*.[28] Forms never generated particulars or functioned as their elements.

It seems, then, as though Aristotle is conflating two different senses of "prior", logical priority and what we could call "reductive priority", e.g. of the one and the indefinite two to numbers. The other arguments will show what use is made of this apparently gross conflation.

Cherniss has an interpretation of the *Metaphysics* sentence which would, if correct, exclude the above interpretation, because argument 1 would then be merely Alexander's own work. But even if Cherniss' interpretation of Aristotle were correct, more would be required to show that this and all the other arguments were not by Aristotle; and in fact considerable doubt can be cast on his way of taking the argument.[29]

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[27] A full treatment would take us too far afield, but there are many passages where Aristotle refers to Platonic "generation" of numbers from the one and the indefinite two – e.g. 1081 a 16-17, 21-23, b 17-18, 1090 b 35-1091 a 5. Cf. Robin, *La théorie des idées et des nombres* (Paris 1908), p. 635-660.

[28] Cf. 1087 b 12-13, 1091 b 1-3, 19-22, 1092 a 5-8. In N chapters 1-2 Aristotle's arguments against Academy theories of principles often argue points only appropriate to *elements* – e.g. 1088 b 14 ff.

[29] Cherniss' argument depends on the assumption that for the Platonists 2 was the first number; but this is not unqualifiedly true. Plato talks of two as the first number (or at least makes 1 not a number but the basis of the series) at *Rep.* 524 d, *Parm.* 144 a, and *Phaedo* 103-5. But he makes 1 the first number at *Laws* 818 c; and the author of the *Epinomis* makes 1 the first number at 978 b-d and 2 the first number at 977 c. (Aristotle is the same, sometimes making 1 the first number, e.g. *Cat.* 5 a 31, *Met.* 1082 b 35, 1080 a 24, sometimes 2, e.g. *Physics* 220 a 27, cf. 1056 b 25, 1085 b 10. Roughly, Plato and Aristotle both have a theoretical account of number making 1 the basis of number and not a number, but in actual *use* they mostly regard 1 as a number, though not consistently).

Cherniss' argument also involves attributing to Aristotle an argument resting on gross and obvious equivocation on "first" as meaning first in the number-series and ontologically first. It is unlikely that anyone with the *Topics* sophistication about ambiguity would use such a vulnerable argument. The supposed parallel at *Eudemian Ethics* 1218 a 1-8 is not really analogous. (It is not in fact an argument about number at all but about multiples, and Aris-

> 2. Besides, the two is assumed to be a principle of number, but by the preceding argument number becomes prior to it. But if number is relative (since every number is the number of something) and number is primary among what there is (being prior at any rate to the two which they assumed as a principle) then according to the Platonists what is relative must be prior to what exists independently. But this is absurd; everything relative is secondary. Relative signifies possession of a preexisting nature, which is prior to the possession occurring to it; what is relative is so to speak an appendage, as Aristotle said in the *Ethics*.

The reference here is to *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096 a 19-22.

2 elucidates the second half of the sentence in Aristotle's text, drawing out an implication of 1. The indefinite two is supposed to be prior to, an ἀρχή of, number; but in fact it follows from 1 that it is the other way round. But the indefinite two is a καθ'αὑτό item, and number a πρός τι item; so argument 1 has the further implication that the Platonists have to agree that a καθ'αὑτό item has a πρός τι item prior to it, which contradicts their other assumption that καθ' αὑτό items are prior to πρός τι items.

Plato shows some interest in the dialogues[30] in the difference between καθ'αὑτό and πρός τι items, and this becomes developed into something like an "Academy theory of categories".[31] As with Aristotle's categories, the distinction in question is one to which linguistic differences are relevant, but it is in no way about words or coextensive with any linguistic distinction. It is a distinction that can only be made

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totle cannot mean "2" by "double", as is standardly assumed, in the light of 999 a 6-10. But it is obviously parallel to an argument that could be created for number). Aristotle is taken to be arguing that there cannot be a Form of number because then it would be prior to the first number, 2, which is absurd. This is countered (e.g. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, p. 54) by pointing out that the Form would be prior not to the first member of the series but to the series as a whole. Aristotle seems perfectly aware of this, however: to him the series is simply consitituted by its members, and is not anything over and above all the members. If there were a Form of it, the Form would be prior to the series as a whole – i.e. the first member of it. So the old series and the Form would together form a new series, and so on ad infinitum. Aristotle is not claiming that the Form would try unsuccessfully to squeeze its way into the old series. He is showing that postulating a Form leads to a whole row of unnecessary new series; the remedy is obviously to be satisfied with the single old series and not postulate a Form for it.

[30] *Charmides* 166-8, *Republic* 438 b-d, *Theaetetus* 160 b, *Philebus* 51 c, *Sophist* 255 c-d.

[31] Alexander, in *Met.* 83. 24-6, Xenocrates fr. 12 Heinze, Divisiones Aristoteleae 39-41 Mutschmann, Hermodorus ap. Simplicius in *Phys.* 247. 30 - 248. 15.

by means of general facts about words, but what are distinguished are items that words signify. A καθ'αὑτό item is essentially complete and independent; it contributes its meaning to the meaning of the sentence on its own[32]. An expression for a πρός τι item, on the other hand, like "double", signifies something incomplete, something demanding another item to complete its sense. It is impossible to give a single clear account of the καθ'αὑτό/πρός τι distinction as it figures in Plato and the Academy, because πρός τι is such a wide notion that it comes to figure in different contrasts with καθ'αὑτό and these deserve a study to themselves.[33] But in all these contrasts καθ'αὑτό retains the idea of completeness and independence, and πρός τι can fairly be translated as "incomplete".

Aristotle uses this Academy distinction elsewhere in the περὶ ἰδεῶν against their arguments for Forms; here it is not the arguments but their results that fall foul of the distinction. Aristotle's procedure here is dubious, however. He assumes that "the indefinite two" refers to a καθ'αὑτό item, and seems justified if it is meant to pick out a unique individual. But he also assumes that "number" refers to a πρός τι item, and he is justified only for himself; *he* has an account of the logic of "number" making it a πρός τι term, but he always makes it clear that *for the Academy* "number" functioned as a καϑ'αὑτό item, this being the ground of most of his arguments against them.[34] Aristotle's argument here is thus weak; the Platonists would simply point out that for them *both* terms here signified καϑ'αὑτό items.

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[32] The Divisiones Aristoteleae passages explain καθ'αὑτό terms as those that do not, while πρόσ τι do, require anything ἐν τῇ ἑρμηνείᾳ,

[33] There seem to be (at least) three different contrasts between καθ'αὑτό and πρός τι in Plato and the Academy (it is worth noting that it is πρός τι and not καθ'αὑτό that produces the variations).
a) a πρός τι item is a relative to which another item is correlative, e.g. double/half. This is apparent in many of the Plato passages and also in Aristotle's *Topics* and *Categories* ch. 7 (though this lets in c) items also).
b) a πρός τι item is one which is essentially *alio*relative – this is the tenor of *Sophist* 255 c-d (see M. Frede, "Prädikation und Existenzaussage" (Göttingen 1967) p. 12-29) and *Charmides* 166-8 in part (see E. Scheibe, "Ueber Relativbegriffe in der Philosophie Platons," *Phronesis* 1967). This is really a distinction of kinds of predication, one importing a different item and one not.
c) a πρός τι item is incomplete, making no extractable independent contribution to the meaning of the sentence. This is clear at *Soph. Elen.* ch. 31 (where a) types come in too).
These different contrasts are never clearly distinguished by Plato or by Hermodorus or anyone else in the Academy. Thus a καθ'αὑτό item is "complete" in not having a correlative, in being employable in non-aliorelative predication, and in making an independent significant contribution to the meaning of the sentence. These roles fall together, whereas the different πρός τι roles fall apart, making καθ'αὑτό the "firmer" category. Forms are of course excellent candidates for καθ'αὑτό items for all three reasons; Krämer (*Arete*, Heidelberg 1959) p. 302-5, claims that "die Kategorie der καθ'αὑτά ist ausschliesslich der Transzendenz vorbehalten, die Empirie beschränkt sich auf das relative Sein", but this is wrong in view of *Theaetetus* 157 a 8-b 1, 188 a 8-10, *Philebus* 51 c-d.

> 3. Even if one were to say that number is quantity and not relative, it would still follow for them that quantity is prior to independent object. But the great-and-the-small itself is relative.

This is not really a separate argument but an appendix to 2. It simply closes off an escape from the conclusion of 2 which would be offered by taking "number" to signify not a πρός τι item but one in the category of quantity.

This must be a reference to Aristotle's own scheme of categories, in which relatives were merely one category among other like quantity, quality, etc; and if it were by Aristotle it would be very interesting, as showing that he could regard his own categories as a commensurable alternative to the Academy's, both coming down to a dichotomy of καϑ'αὑτό versus the rest.

It is much more likely, however, to come from Alexander. Alexander has just elucidated 2 by a reference to *Nic. Ethics* 1096 a 19-22, where Aristotle says that "good" is predicated in three of his categories (substance, quality and relative), and then adds that καϑ'αὑτό and substance are prior to relative, which is like an appendage. Aristotle does seem here to be subsuming his own categories under the Academy dichotomy (the passage is unique in this regard), and it is likely that Alexander, having referred to the *Ethics* passage, goes on to make a comment suggested by it. There is nothing in the context to suggest why Aristotle should have wanted to make this comment.

Consequently, the odd sentence about the great-and-small is probably due to Alexander too. It would be odd for Aristotle to contradict his earlier assumption that the indefinite two was a καϑ'αὑτό item;

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[34] "Number" is a πρός τι term for Aristotle: 1092 b 19, and cf. his treatment of the logic of "number" at *Physics* 221 a 9-17, b 14-16, *Cat.* 5 a 15-38, *Met.* 1023 b 12-17, 1034 b 33-35, 1024 a 11-19, 1039 a 11-14.
On Plato's view of "number" as a καϑ'αὑτό term and numbers as independently existing entities, cf. 1053 b 9 ff, the whole of M chs. 1 and 2, 1083 b 19-24, 1085 b 34 ff.

Alexander, however, is probably thinking of two passages in the *Categories*, again perhaps suggested by the *Ethics* passage[35].
It is convenient to take 4-6 together.

> (4). Besides, it follows that they have to say that what is relative is a principle of and prior to what exists independently, inasmuch as a Form is for them a principle of actual objects, the Form's being a Form lies in its being a paradeigm, and a paradeigm is relative (a paradeigm is a paradeigm of something).
>
> (5). Besides, if Forms' being Forms lies in their being paradeigms, then things that come into being in relation to them, and of which they are things that come into being in relation to them, and of which they are Forms, must be likenesses of them, and so one could say that all natural objects become relative.
>
> (6). Besides, if Forms' being Forms lies in their being paradeigms, and if a paradeigm exists for the sake of what comes into being in relation to to it, and what depends on something else is inferior to it, then the Forms will be inferior to things that come into being in relation to them.

Aristotle argues, not, as he did elsewhere in the περὶ ἰδεῶν, that the establishment of Forms by one argument violates the Platonists' logical distinction, but rather that the Forms, as established by the One over Many (as in 1), which is indifferent in the matter, nevertheless violate the distinction as a result of the property of being paradeigmatic which Forms possess. Forms are paradeigms or models, perfect particulars exemplifying properties that earthly things possess deficiently. But since a model is a model *of* something, models, and thus Forms, are dependent items; so it is absurd that they should be prior to the independent items whose ἀρχαί they are.

These arguments are refreshing after the solemnity with which Forms are hailed as paradeigms in the middle dialogues. They also make an important point. Plato insists (e.g. at *Rep.* 523-5) that some at least καϑ'αὑτό terms pick out natural objects like fingers, earth, etc. But even this much is threatened by the present conception. according to which all general terms stand for Forms, by the One over Many, and all Forms are paradeigms, and all paradeigms are relatives. There will be nothing left, either Forms or particulars, to be καϑ'αὑτό items.

The third argument is weaker; a paradeigm or model will be inferior to what it is a paradeigm or model of, because it is "for its sake".

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[35] *Categories* 5 b 11-6 a 11 (and cf. 3 b 30-2), where Aristotle discusses and tries to neutralize the view of some thinkers that "great-small" and "many-few" belong in the category of πρός τι or relative and not that of quantity.

This is valid of things like architects' models, which exist for the sake of the house that is to be built, not vice versa; but it is often clear in the dialogues that Forms are meant to be models in a somewhat different sense, something aimed at. Moreover, this point is independent of the more general points in the first two arguments, having nothing to do with the nature of the πρός τι relation as such.

These arguments belong together and are somewhat different from the other nine; but they share with them the assumption that Forms are established by the One over Many and as a result are "prior" to the objects whose Forms they are. They are also interesting in that they show on a smaller scale the strategy to be found in the arguments as a whole. Aristotle is attacking the way Plato has extended the use of a hitherto restricted term and lays great weight on the new, extended use, but without giving any clear content to this new use. It is not just that "model" and "likeness" are metaphors[36]; what is wrong is best brought out by a passage in the *Topics*:[37]

> Words are sometimes used neither equivocally, nor metaphorically, nor in their proper sense; for example, the law is said to be the "measure" or "image" <εἴκων> of things naturally just. Such phrases are worse than metaphors; for a metaphor in a way adds to our knowledge of what is indicated on account of the similarity... But the kind of phrase of which we are speaking does not add to our knowledge; for no similarity exists in virtue of which the law is a "measure" or an "image", nor is the law usually described by these words in their proper sense. So, if anyone says that the law is a "measure" or an "image" in the proper sense of these words, he is lying; for an image is something whose coming into being is due to imitation, and this does not apply to the law. If, however, he is not using the word in its proper sense, obviously he has spoken obscurely, and with worse effect than any kind of metaphorical language.

The application of this to Aristotle's complaints about calling things "likenesses" of Forms is fairly obvious. Either this is meant literally, and is flatly false, or not literally, and is unintelligible. Hence there is a point in the way in which Aristotle insists on taking terms like "likeness" and "model" in their narrowest and most obvious sense. By pressing the original, precise meaning in its new, portentous setting and producing absurdities, he forces the issue: if the word does not have its ordinary meaning, what meaning does it have? He is attacking the imprecision of thought involved in cavalier extension of an originally precise term.

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[36] Though Aristotle objects also to defining in metaphorical terms, because it leads to arguing in metaphors- *Post. An.* 97 b 37, *Topics* 158 b 9-24.
[37] 140 a 7 ff (Forster's Loeb translation).

As we shall see, there are important analogies here to the structure of Aristotle's argument as a whole.

7. If what is predicated in common of certain things is a principle and Form of them, and principle is predicated in common of principles and element of elements, then there must be something prior to, and a principle of, principles and elements. So there cannot be a principle, nor an element.

7 generalizes, and brings out explicitly, the assumptions at work in all these arguments. Any Form, as established by the One over Many, is prior to, and a first principle of, the many to which the common term applies; so Forms are first principles. But Plato sets up the one and the indefinite two as first principles.These are meant to be unique individuals: "the one" and "the indefinite two" function like proper names (in English this looks anomalous, but in Greek the definite article can be used with names or expressions that function like names, e.g. number-terms.) Aristotle shows that these unique individuals can still be characterised by general terms, so that the One over Many will apply, and a Form will be set up, which will be prior to them and thus a first principle of them. We can say of any principle like the indefinite two that it "is a principle" (or "is an element"); so by the One over Many there is a Form of Element or Form of Principle prior to it; so it will no longer be primary, and so not a first principle.

Formally this is simply a generalization of 1. The indefinite two cannot be a principle because "two" can be predicated of it. And by 7, ***any*** putative first principle can be called "a principle", and by the same argument cannot be a principle.

There is, however, a difference between statements like, "the indefinite two is a two" and "the indefinite two is a principle". The difference can be brought out in different ways (and it can also be questioned altogether on a theoretical level, but I shall ignore this for now). The first statement tells us something about the indefinite two, whereas the second is informative not about the indefinite two itself but about the logical capacities of the expression "the indefinite two". (The difference is analogous to that between "Socrates is bald", which tells us something about Socrates, and "Socrates is a material object", which tells us something about the logical capacities of an expression like "Socrates").

Aristotle's argument depends on assimilating these two types. This need not mean that he is himself confused; he feels entitled to exploit the Academy's confusions against them. If the One over Many has unrestricted application, it will produce Forms even for "formal" (or "second-level") characteristics. The argument discredits not Aristotle but the unrestricted One over Many.

Aristotle has a purpose in exploiting the totally unrestricted One over Many: it proves at a stroke that there can be no first principles other than Forms. If applicability of a general term implies a prior Form, then *nothing* to which a general term can be applied can be a first principle. While Forms are first principles by the One over Many, there can be no other candidates on any other grounds; if any such candidate can be characterized even formally (e.g. as an element) then the One over Many applies and a Form will crop up to usurp priority. Only Forms can be principles because any other candidates will have Forms prior to them.

This argument is not just eristic; Aristotle sees that there is a real problem, which he returns to several times[38], apart from the question of Forms.

Meanwhile, what of the obvious objection that since some Forms at least have formal characteristics, surely some Forms can be predicated of, and so become prior to, other Forms? Why are Forms exempt from the omnicompetent One over Many? This objection is blocked in 8.

> 8. Besides, a Form is not prior to a Form; all Forms are alike principles. But the original One and the original Two are Forms just like the original Man and the original Horse and any other Form. So none of them can be prior to any other, and so not a principle. So the one and the indefinite two are not principles.

No Form can be prior to another Form; they are all on the same logical level. This means that the One over Many can have no application to Forms, for if it did there would be priority between two Forms one of which was predicated of the other. Statements that appear to predicate one Form of another cannot in fact be so taken. "Man is an animal", for example, would have to be interpreted as saying of men that they are animals, not as saying anything about the Form Man.[39] So Forms are after all protected from the dreaded application of the One over Many which ruled out all other candidates for being first principles.

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[38] The problem whether first principles are universal or particular (two ἀπορίαι, at 1003 a 5-17, 999 b 24-1000 a 4; Aristotle attempts to solve it at 1086 b 14-1087 a 25). If they are particular, problems arise over how they can be one in kind with anything else, how they can be any kind of "such", and not a mere "this".

7 and 8 together produce a very strong result. This is clear when we notice that Aristotle has proved that *the Forms of One and Two* are on the same logical level as any other Forms, and at once concludes that *the one and the indefinite two* are not first principles. Why does he think that the former entitles him to the latter? He has shown that only Forms can be first principles (by 7), and that all Forms are alike first principles (by 8). So if the one and the indefinite two are not identified with the Forms of One and Two they cannot be first principles. If they are so identified, they are first principles only in the sense in which all Forms are; they are not the first principles of any other Forms. (In particular, they could not be the first principles of the number-Forms, the function for which they were introduced).

In the next three arguments, Aristotle uses explicitly the assumption that the one and the indefinite two are Forms (the Forms of One and Two). It is an important part of Wilpert's interpretation of these arguments[40] that this assumption is made all through the arguments. But in fact it is only used when it is not an *assumption* but something that Aristotle has *proved*, by argument. By 7 and 8 all and only Forms are first principles. So if the one and the indefinite two are to be first principles, they must be Forms, and they could only be the Forms of One and Two. This is the heart of Aristotle's argument, and all he does henceforward is to draw out supplementary absurdities from this position.

This analysis involves rejecting Wilpert's analysis of 8[41], which maintains that the argument is concerned with genus-species hierarchies of Forms. This view can be shown to be implausible on several counts.[42]

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[39] Cf. the distinction Owen draws ("Dialectic and Eristic in the treatment of the Forms", *Aristotle on Dialectic*, ed. Owen, Oxford 1964, p. 108-9) between two sorts of predicates of Forms: A-predicates, which apply to a Form in virtue of its status as a Form, and B-predicates, which apply to it in virtue of the particular concept it represents.

[40] ZaF p. 101-6. Wilpert sees this not as misunderstanding or eristic but as part of Aristotle's strategy in these arguments. See n. 47.

[41] ZaF. p. 114-5.

[42] It leaves us without any grounds for taking an argument about the Forms of One and Two to apply to the one and the indefinite two; it assumes that One and Two were in some way the highest genera of Forms like Man and Horse;

9. Besides, it is absurd for a Form to be given its form by a Form – they are all forms. But if the one and the indefinite two are principles, there will be a Form given its form by a Form – the original two by the original one, since that is how the Platonists say they are principles, the one as form, the two as matter. So they cannot be principles.

By the preceding arguments, if the one and the indefinite two are first principles, they must be Forms. But this conflicts with the Platonist conception of them as form and matter. Wilpert[11] thinks that here we have proof that the Academy explicitly used the terms "form" and "matter" of their principles, because Aristotle says that that is what they *say* (λέγουσι). This is not conclusive, unfortunately, for Aristotle also says that some Platonic arguments λέγουσι the Third Man (990 b 17), and this can only mean "imply, whether they realise it or not". It is more probable that Aristotle here has in mind his own account of the one and the indefinite two at A 6, where he says that the one was form and the two matter in the production of numbers (987 b 20-2, cf. 987 b 33-988 a 4); so this argument is best regarded as presenting a contradiction not between two explicit Platonic theories but between two consequences Aristotle draws from his own interpretation of Plato.

10. If they deny that the indefinite two is a Form, then in the first place there will be something prior to it, though it is a principle. This is the original Two, since the indefinite two, not being the original Two, is two by participation in the original Two. It is by participation that two will be predicated of it, just as it is with ‹ordinary› twos.

This blocks a Platonist objection that it misrepresents the indefinite two to make it identical with the Form of Two. Aristotle simply repeats the earlier reasoning: if the Platonist refuses to identify the indefinite two with the Form of Two, then it cannot be a first principle,

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and it assumes that Plato held more general concepts to be "naturally prior" to more specific ones. But though this appears in the Divisiones Aristoteleae (64 and 65) there are no grounds for saying that Plato took the genus to be naturally prior to the species. Cf. Cherniss, A.C.P.A. 43-48, 264-5. There is evidence that Plato applied the idea to the sequence solid-plane-line-point (apart from the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ there is *Laws* 894 a, and *Met.* 1018 b 37-1019 a 4), but this cannot have been extended to genus and species, since Aristotle argues against it on the grounds that it leads to absurdities whether, e.g. lines and points are generically different or are related as genus and species.

[43] ZaF p. 115- "platonische Lehre, und Aristoteles beruft sich auf den Wortlaut".

since the Form of Two will be prior to it just as it is to any other two.

Why is the argument repeated for the indefinite two and not for the one?[44] I suspect that Aristotle wants to strengthen his point by recalling *Phaedo* 101, the passage where Plato insists that the only satisfactory αἰτία of the fact that things form pairs is participation in the Form of Two.

> 11. Besides, if Forms are simple they cannot come from principles that are different, but the one and the indefinite two are different.

Forms are simple, internally uncompounded, so they cannot come from principles that are different. Aristotle is here understanding "principles" in the sense of *elements*, as he does in several of his arguments in N chs 1-2; if a thing "comes from" different elements then there will be a persisting difference in its resulting constitution.

This is the only argument which says straightforwardly that the one and the indefinite two are principles of *Forms*. This need not conflict with 2 where they were said to be principles of number, since 11 need not mean *all* Forms, but merely the number-Forms, the Forms of the natural numbers.

> 12. Besides, there will be a remarkable number of twos, if there are, all different, the original Two, the indefinite two, the mathematical two we use in counting (not identical with any of them) and then besides these the two in countable and perceptible objects.

This argument depends on distinguishing as many different twos as possible, whereas the previous ones stressed the need to identify the indefinite two with the Form of Two. 12 therefore seems to be a separate argument, put here (by Alexander?) because it is about twos, which figure in some of the other arguments, but unlike them in starting from what the Academy actually said rather than what they should say to be consistent.

Aristotle's conclusion.

> These results are absurd, so obviously one can follow up the Platonists' own assumptions about Forms and do away with the principles which are more important to them then Forms.

[44] Wilpert (ZaF p. 114) thinks that the asymmetry here is due to the fact that the Form of One or Unity has already been regarded as doing something of the work (unifying, etc.) of the one as first principle. But this is dubious; at any rate no equation is ever explicitly made.

Aristotle takes his arguments against the principles to hurt a Platonist because the latter cares more about them than about Forms. There is no mention at all of a relation of natural priority between Forms and first principles, and this gives further support to the conclusion that Alexander, in interpreting these arguments in terms of it, is importing unsuitable concepts from the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ.

We can now draw together some results.

V.

The arguments themselves make no use of natural priority of the principles to Forms; Alexander is not justified in bringing it in. Nor are the principles the principles of all Forms. Arguments 1, 2, and 3 assume, and 2 states, that they are the principles of *number*; 11 shows that these are Form numbers (and not, e.g. intermediates)[45], but the idea that they are the principles of *all* Forms nowhere occurs.

Thus the arguments themselves make very clearly the fact that we do not need to be bound by the dichotomy I mentioned in III, which compelled us either to explain away the one and the indefinite two, or to find here the characteristic ideas of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ. We can agree with Wilpert that the one and the indefinite two are in these arguments, and that the arguments revolve round their character as principles; but we can also agree with Cherniss that there is no need to find here a theory of principles in which Forms and everything else were derived from the principles, and Forms were identified with numbers in some way.[46] The false dichotomy has produced nothing but confusion.

However, solving this problem seems merely to land us with another. The arguments are clearly meant to show that the theory that the one and the indefinite two are principles of number threatens the theory of Forms – of *all* Forms and not just the number-Forms. But just where does the clash lie? Wilpert's interpretation at least made it clear why the new theory should clash with the old; according to him Aristotle is pointing out that the new and the old versions of the theory of Forms are not consistent.[47] But on the interpretation which I have given to the arguments, we do not have two stages of the theory of Forms (an early one with plain Forms, a later one where Forms have become interpreted as some kind of number). We have the theory of Forms on the one hand, and on the other the theory that the one and the indefinite two are the principles of number. In what way are *these* incompatible?

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[45] Argument 12 may suggest that the indefinite two is in play as the generator of twos (the doubler), but this is implicit at best, and in any case 12 is somewhat isolated from the other arguments.

[46] I think it can be shown that "identification of Forms and numbers" is not Aristotle's report of what Plato said, but his own polemical criticism. Cf. Cherniss, *Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley, 1945) ch. 2. This thesis is independent of Cherniss' wider claims about the unwritten doctrines, and can be independently proved from Aristotle's own arguments.

This will become clearer if we first look at the "theory of Forms" as Aristotle presents it in these arguments. What sort of theory of Forms is it?

VI.

In these arguments the sole argument for Forms that Aristotle uses is the One over Many; and he uses it very heavily. It is used explicitly in 1 and 10 and presented in totally unrestricted form explicitly in 7. If *any* general term can be predicated of some object, showing it to be even in principle a member of some "many" to which a common term can be implied, then there is a Form.

Plato does at *Rep.* 596 a accept the One over Many principle. But this is the only occasion on which he does; and it is explicitly given up at *Politicus* 262-3. Plato never *uses* it as a sole and sufficient argument for Forms; and wisely, since to do so would involve him in many difficulties and inconsistencies with the arguments he uses elsewhere.[48] So although Aristotle is not imputing anything to Plato which the latter did not say, it is a travesty to use only this argument to identify the theory of Forms, taking no account of any others, and also to extend it to predications of the kind in 7, which were clearly not in Plato's mind in the *Republic* passage.

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[47] ZaF. p. 105, "Es geht um die Widersprüche, die sich zwischen der rein logischen Methode der Analysis und der neuen ontologisch-physikalischen ergeben. Auf diese Widersprüche weist Aristotles nun dadurch hin,dass er die Ergebnisse, die das neue Zerdenken des Seienden zeitigt, den Forderungen der noch nicht aufgegeben alten Methoden unterwirft".

[48] Since the One over Many outbids any other arguments for Forms, it would be strange for Plato to put all the weight on an argument he mentions casually once, and spend time on other arguments that establish Forms for only a subset of terms served by the One over Many. Further, some of these arguments depend on the fact that not all general terms, but only those "incomplete" in some way, lead us to demand Forms (e.g. *Rep.* 523-5). If Plato had relied on the One over Many there would have been no doubt as to whether there were Forms for artefacts (cf. Alexander in *Met.* 79. 3-80.6), or for "unworthy" things; yet Plato is puzzled about which terms do and which do not stand for Forms at *Parm.* 130-1.

Aristotle stresses other aspects of Forms: they are simple (11), unrelated among themselves by priority (8), paradeigms (4-6). It is true that all these features can be found in the Forms of the middle dialogues. Forms are conceived of as simple units, the end of the process of analysis and not themselves subject to further analysis. A passage in the *Phaedo* is sometimes taken to show that Forms even in the middle dialogues could be thought of as having intercommunion and standing in hierarchic relationships; but a careful reading of the passage shows that what Plato is doing is merely to point out relations of compatibility and implication between the concepts that Forms represent, and that this has no tendency to show that Forms themselves are not simple, indivisible units.[49] Forms are also often explicitly said to be paradeigms in the early and middle dialogues.[50]

Even though Aristotle is not falsifying Plato in giving Forms this characterisation, he is giving a travesty of Plato's ideas in combining the characteristics he stresses. In these arguments Forms figure as referents for general terms, simple unrelated units, perfect exemples of the characteristics they represent. This is a gross caricature of the theory of Forms of the middle dialogues. It stresses all the features leading Plato into trouble which he recognised in the *Parmenides*, and which drop out of the way Forms are characterised in the later dialogues. Although the specific problem of the Third Man is not indicated here, the extreme version of the theory which Aristotle gives here will obviously lead to absurdities at once: paradeigmatism together with the totally unrestricted One over Many immediately presents us with prefect particulars for all kinds of unsuitable characteristics.

Why does Aristotle present this travesty as the theory of Forms? In other arguments of the περὶ ἰδεῶν he had shown himself quite aware of the fact that the Platonists employed many subtle and different arguments, and that there was more to the theory than paradeigmatism and the One over Many.

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[49] Cf. Cherniss, A.C.P.A. n. 128; R.E.A. p. 39, 54. Cf. also A.C.P.A. p. 515, "To refute a Platonic doctrine it is sufficient to show that its consequences are inconsistent with the basic principles of the uniqueness and simplicity, i.e. indivisibility, of the ideas".

[50] *Euthyphro* 6 e, *Republic* 500 e, *Theaetetus* 176 e, *Timaeus* 28-9, 39 e, 48-9, 52 c, *Phaedo* 74 e.

Aristotle is here concerned to present a theory as being the *early* theory of Forms. He is opposing it to a later development in Plato's thought (the theory of principles). So he is concerned to stress all the "early" features. He succeeds in doing so, somewhat polemically it is true, by identifying the early theory *solely* by those features of it that were given up later. Ignoring any continuity of thought between early and late dialogues, he stresses only the changes and presents the early theory simply as a collection of features which were changed or abandoned in Plato's later thought. It is not surprising that this does not make the theory appear attractive or even coherent.

Thus the One over Many is given up in the later dialogues, such as the *Politicus*, interest centring rather on the problems in analysing and classifying concepts; where the point of an exercise is to sort out which expressions do, and which do not, actually stand for a kind in nature, there is no future in stressing the principle that actually *all* general terms applying to a "many" pick out some one thing in a logically democratic way. Similarly, Plato abandons the view of Forms as atomistic unities in arguing for the "communion of Kinds" in the *Sophist*; new and profound investigations of language leave far behind the simple viewpoint of the *Phaedo*. And while Plato never commits himself explicitly to the principle that Forms can be "prior and posterior" to one another, he undoubtedly becomes interested in the project of "dividing" a general term into other, ever more specific terms, an interest in hierarchies of general terms that implies rejection of the principle that all general terms alike stand for Forms which are on the same logical level. Finally, paradeigmatism disappears in the later dialogues.[51]

Aristotle's "theory of Forms" here is thus a sweeping-up of all the feature of Forms of the "classical" period which Plato later rejected. He is not identifying the theory of Forms as a whole with this, for he would not say that Plato abandoned Forms in his later years; even when discussing the unwritten doctrines, which are a far remove from the classical theory, Aristotle talks as though these involved some kind of identification of Forms with numbers. But he is aware that while Plato continued to talk about Forms, he regarded them in a very different way in, say, the *Sophist*, from the way they were regarded in the *Phaedo*. He presents the theory here in what he sees as its original motivation and original form in order to contrast it clearly with a later development in Plato's thought, which is clearly different, whether or not Plato continued to use the language of Forms.[52]

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[51] I take it as proved that the *Timaeus* is not a late dialogue (G. E. L. Owen, "The Place of the *Timaeus* in Plato's Dialogues" (*Classical Quarterly* 1953)).

So while Wilpert was basically right in seeing the purpose of these arguments to be the contrast produced between two stages of Plato's thought, we have seen that this cannot be taken to be a contrast between two stages of the theory of Forms. Rather Aristotle is contrasting the theory of Forms in its original shape with the later theory of principles. The original theory of Forms is inconsistent with the theory that the one and the indefinite two are the first principles of at least some Forms (the number-Forms).

I think that this interpretation of the contrast Aristotle is making illuminates the structure of the arguments, in two ways.

Firstly, it explains the persistent equivocation on "prior" and "first principles", which seemed so gross. Again and again Aristotle treats "prior" as though it meant exactly the same thing when applied to the reductive priority of the one and the two to number, and to the logical priority of a Form to its instances. Both are treated as equivalent and as meaning indifferently "first principle". Prima facie such a move on Aristotle's part is hard to understand. Aristotle often complains that other philosophers make mistakes by using a word with several different senses as though it had only one. And the very first three chapters of the philosophical lexicon are taken up with examining the different senses of ἀρχή, αὔτιον and στοιχεῖον. So it seems as though Aristotle must be conscious of his equivocation here on ἀρχή, and if he is doing it deliberately, and that is all there is to the argument, the exercise comes to seem futile and eristic.

However, if the above analysis is correct there is another possibility: Aristotle may be using the equivocation to force to the surface a conflation of two sense of ἀρχή on the part of *Plato*. The Academy are tacitly condoning an inconsistency in using a word with two senses as though it had only one. In the original theory of Forms, Forms were "prior" to the things whose Forms they were. Plato has now produced his theory of principles, which are "prior" to the things whose principles they are. But "prior" and "first principle" are obviously being used in a very different sense. It seems that Plato did not give any clear account of what the difference was.[53] He went on using of his new first principles the language originally used of Forms. This explains why Aristotle feels entitled to insist on a single sense for "prior"; the point of the arguments is to show that the words must be being used in two senses because if one presses consistently a single sense the results are intolerable for a Platonist. This is analogous not only to Aristotle's similarly polemical move with "paradeigm" in arguments 4-6, but his general policy of demolishing pretentious theories by showing them to rest on equivocation of key terms.

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[52] Forms as they figure in the *Sophist* and *Philebus*, for example, with no exalted paradeigmatic status, and with emphasis on their internal complexity and mutual intercombination, would be no use to Aristotle, for the arguments for postulating them would be so different.

Secondly, the strategy of the arguments themselves becomes clearer. What Aristotle does is to *prove* that only Forms can be first principles: if the one and the indefinite two are to be first principles, then they must be Forms. In other words, if the new theory is using "prior", etc. in the same sense as the old, then the new theory reduces to the old. This (not natural priority) is the way the arguments for the Forms "do away with" the first principles. The one and the indefinite two are "made away with" if one still accepts the theory of Forms in its original shape, because if they really have the priority claimed for them they have to be identified with the Forms of One and Two, which were provided by the old theory already.

Aristotle's arguments might seem to be directed against people who accepted the old theory of Forms and also the new theory of principles of number. Perhaps indeed there were people in the Academy who were more orthodox than Plato and tried to retain the classical theory along with the later developments. But this is unlikely; besides, who would accept Aristotle's version of the classical theory? And the arguments would lose some interest in that they would no longer be directed against Plato, since Plato loses interest in the classical theory and never tries to reconcile it with his later ideas.[54]

I think it is more likely that the arguments are directed at Plato, and that the point is like that in arguments 4-6. Plato is continuing to use the *language* of the classical theory of Forms, long after abandonment, for all practical philosophical purposes, of the theory itself. Aristotle is pointing out that either the theories are inconsistent or the words are not being used in the same sense.

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[53] Cf. Theophrastus *Metaphysics* 6 b 11-16, where he says that Plato "reduced" things to Forms, Forms to numbers and numbers to the one and indefinite two; the same word (ἀνάπτειν) is used of all these stages, which suggests that Plato did not any stage of his theory of principles tell a very clear story.

[54] Hence the impossible tangles involved in, for example, trying to place the Forms (in their original conception) in the πέρας/ἄπειρον scheme of the *Philebus* for example.

It should now be clear that these arguments are by no means as weak or negligible as has been thought, in spite of their apparent peculiarity. Their weakness lies not in their form or aim or structure, but in the lack of sympathy and philosophical imagination which leads to such a travesty of the classical theory of Forms. In a deeper sense the arguments *do* miss their mark, since Plato at any rate would never have agreed that the theory Aristotle uses here was a fair summary of what is in the early and middle dialogues.

The ingenuity of the arguments can be admired, however. A Platonist could not avoid them by claiming that it is unsympathetic to interpret the one and the indefinite two as Forms. Aristotle does not just assume that they are Forms; he *proves* it. The only way a Platonist could effectively get out of these arguments would be to attack the use of the univocity of "prior" as applied to logical and reductive priority. But how could he do this? One cannot just say that a word has different senses without being able to say what the senses are. The Platonist would have to be able to give a whole clear account of *how* the one and the indefinite two were first principles of numbers and how this differred from logical priority.

Perhaps Plato tried to fill this gap with the account of the περὶ τἀγαθοῦ; and perhaps, too this is the origin of Plato's concept of natural priority. However, apart from speculation, the arguments do seem to be aimed at revealing some such gap.

VII.

Although disagreeing with Wilpert's analysis of these arguments, I take him to have seized on what is interesting about them: Aristotle is revealing an inconsistency between earlier and later Platonic ideas.

But although Aristotle is not arguing directly for the falsity of either theory, merely their mutual incompatibility, this does not support the thesis that his arguments in the περὶ ἰδεῶν are merely "immanent", i.e. that he is criticising not the theory of Forms itself but merely the quality of the arguments for it. Whatever "Platonism" meant to Aristotle at any stage, it can never have meant holding the caricature version of the theory of Forms presented here.[55] Nor is there the faintest reason to believe that he ever supported as his own the theory that numbers were derived from the one and the indefinite two. There is no evidence that he did believe it, and his references to it are unfailingly hostile or derisory. Aristotle is thus showing the inconsistency of two Platonic ideas neither of which he accepts. This is hardly compatible with his writing the περὶ ἰδεῶν in order to criticise the arguments for dogmas he accepted already on other grounds.[56]

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[55] Any possible doubts should be quelled by the other περὶ ἰδεῶν arguments, e.g. against the One over Many, and the "Third Man", which exposes the dangers in paradeigmatism.

[56] I am grateful to Professor G. E. L. Owen for helpful criticism of an earlier version of this paper.

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